

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
DHMH
Tanning Hazards Information Sheet

DHMH recommendation is that you be provided with the following information so that you can make an informed judgment about indoor tanning and the use of tanning facilities.

What is “tanning”?

Tanning is your body’s response when your skin is exposed to ultraviolet (UV) radiation. How deeply you tan depends on your skin type. Some people may tan deeply; some may burn and not tan at all.

What are the health risks of tanning?

The health risks from indoor tanning and exposure to UV radiation include:

- Skin cancer
- Premature skin aging
- Skin and eye burns
- Allergic-type reactions
- Cataracts (clouding of the lens of the eye)
- Reduced immunity

Are indoor tanning devices safer than tanning in natural sunlight?

No. The radiation produced by tanning devices can damage your skin, just like sunlight. Exposure to ultraviolet radiation, whether from a tanning device or the sun, increases your health risks.

You should avoid using tanning devices:

- If you sunburn easily and don't tan. If you don't tan in the sun, you probably won't tan with an indoor tanning device.
- If you get frequent cold sores. UV radiation may cause them to appear more frequently.
- If you have certain diseases, such as lupus and vitiligo, which can worsen from exposure to UV radiation.

- If you are using certain foods, cosmetics or medicines that can make you sunburn more easily.

This is called “**photosensitivity**” and can cause a serious reaction. Ask the tanning facility operator for a list of these items.

More about Photosensitivity

If you take certain medicines and are exposed to UV radiation, you may have an allergic-type (photosensitive) reaction, including exaggerated skin burn, itching and scaling skin, rash, and swelling.

These medicines may include but are not limited to many antibiotics, some birth control pills, high blood pressure medications, antihistamines, tranquilizers, and diabetes medications.

If you are taking any medicines, check with your doctor or pharmacist before you tan.

If you choose to tan in spite of the risks:

- Always use protective eyewear. If you don’t have your own, request them from the salon operator.
- Learn your skin type and exposure limits as listed in the tanning device exposure directions.
- Seek immediate medical attention for severe skin burns, eye burns, and allergic-type reactions. See a doctor if you see an unusual skin lesion or sore.
- Report any injuries or adverse reactions promptly to the tanning facility operator.